



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Division of Animal Health

March 27, 2020

Operating Dog Shelters, Rescues Following the 'Safer at Home' Order

The [Safer at Home order](#) issued March 24 by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) at the direction of Gov. Tony Evers contains specific language that lists animal shelters and rescues as “essential businesses and operations,” thus permitting them to continue operating.

In light of this information, shelters and rescues are reminded that all public health precautions should be in place to prevent the spread of the COVID-19. Shelters and rescues should consider the impact of fewer personnel and resources when determining the number of animals under their care. Facilities also must keep in mind the ban on the gatherings of 10 or more people.

Another important consideration is the reality that veterinary clinics are limiting the number and availability of appointments and services. Any shelter or rescue experiencing difficulty in obtaining certificates of veterinary inspection (CVIs) that are needed for adoption should consider a foster-to-adopt arrangement. If this arrangement is used, it is important to remember that all required records must be maintained, and the adoption contract is not competed until the CVI requirement is met. Until that time, the dog will remain the property and responsibility of the shelter/rescue.

Veterinary care and all healthcare services provided to animals are allowed under the “healthcare and public health operations” exemption in the Safer at Home order. However, nonessential veterinary care should be avoided.

While veterinary care is permitted, the emergency order does outline the following requirements:

13. Essential Businesses and Operations. All entities described in this section shall meet Social Distancing Requirements between all individuals on the premises to the extent possible. Essential Businesses and Operations shall, to the greatest extent possible, use technology to avoid meeting in person, including virtual meetings, teleconference, and remote work (i.e., work from home). For the purposes of this Order, Essential Businesses and Operations means Healthcare and Public Health Operations, Human Services Operations, Essential Infrastructure, and Essential Governmental Functions, and the following:

*Food and beverage production, transport, and agriculture. Food and beverage manufacturing, production, processing, transportation, and cultivation; farming, livestock, fishing, baking, and other production agriculture, including cultivation, marketing, production, and distribution of animals and goods for consumption; **businesses that provide food, shelter, and other necessities of life for animals, including animal shelters, boarding, rescues, kennels, and adopting facilities;** farm and agriculture equipment, supplies, and repair services.*

Anyone needing of clarification of “essential businesses” can visit the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) website: <https://wedc.org/essentialbusiness/>. This page also includes a form to contact WEDC with questions.



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